

1 (b) configuring an intelligent agent to execute the at least one selected
2 program module to handle the computer task.

1 50. (New Claim) The method of claim 49, wherein the intelligent agent includes
2 only the selected program module from the plurality of program modules, and wherein
3 the configuring step includes the step of constructing the intelligent agent using the
4 selected program module.

1 51. (New Claim) The method of claim 49, wherein the intelligent agent includes
2 each of the plurality of program modules, and wherein the configuring step includes the
3 step of configuring the intelligent agent to execute only the selected program module to
4 handle the computer task.

1 52. (New Claim) The method of claim 49, wherein the selecting step is
2 performed by the intelligent agent.

1 53. (New Claim) The method of claim 49, wherein the selecting step is
2 performed by an agent manager.

1 54. (New Claim) The method of claim 49, wherein the plurality of program
2 modules are additive program modules, and wherein the selecting step includes the step
3 of selecting a subset of the plurality of program modules to handle the computer task.

1 55. (New Claim) The method of claim 49, wherein the plurality of program
2 modules are alternative program modules, and wherein the selecting step includes the step
3 of selecting only one of the plurality of program modules to handle the computer task.

1 56. (New Claim) The method of claim 49, wherein the selecting step includes the
2 step of adaptively selecting the selected program module using a reinforcement learning
3 algorithm.

1 57. (New Claim) The method of claim 56, further comprising the steps of:

2 (a) obtaining performance information relating to the performance of the
3 selected program module in handling the computer task; and

4 (b) supplying the performance information to the reinforcement learning
5 algorithm.

1 58. (New Claim) The method of claim 56, wherein the reinforcement learning
2 algorithm is implemented in an adaptive heuristic critic neural network.

1 59. (New Claim) The method of claim 49, wherein the selecting step includes the
2 steps of:

3 (a) matching each of the plurality of program modules with a value of the
4 objective criteria;

5 (b) determining a selected value of the objective criteria; and

6 (c) selecting as the selected program module a program module matching
7 the selected value of the objective criteria.

1 60. (New Claim) The method of claim 59, wherein the selecting step further
2 includes the step of retrieving information for a selected computer task, wherein the
3 determining step determines the selected value of the objective criteria using the retrieved
4 information.

1 61. (New Claim) The method of claim 49, wherein the intelligent agent is
2 configured to conduct negotiations in an electronic commerce application, and wherein

1 the domain knowledge for each of the plurality of program modules is related to the
2 autonomy delegated thereto.

1 62. (New Claim) The method of claim 61, wherein the plurality of program
2 modules includes a semi-autonomous program module, a fully-autonomous program
3 module, and a fully-dependent program module.

1 63. (New Claim) The method of claim 61, wherein the objective criteria includes
2 a risk that a dispatched agent is subjected to in negotiations.

1 64. (New Claim) An apparatus for handling a computer task, comprising:
2 an intelligent agent including at least one of a plurality of program
3 modules having varied degrees of domain knowledge, wherein the plurality of
4 program modules are configured to handle a common computer task, and wherein,
5 based upon an objective criteria, at least one selected program module from the
6 plurality of program modules is selected to handle the computer task.

1 65. (New Claim) The apparatus of claim 64, further comprising an evaluation
2 module configured to select the selected program module based upon the objective
3 criteria.

1 66. (New Claim) The apparatus of claim 65, further comprising a reinforcement
2 learning module, coupled to the evaluation module and configured to adaptively select
3 program modules based upon the performance of the plurality of program modules in
4 handling the computer task.

1 67. (New Claim) The apparatus of claim 66, wherein the reinforcement learning
2 module comprises an adaptive heuristic critic neural network.

1 68. (New Claim) The apparatus of claim 65, wherein the evaluation module is
2 configured to retrieve information for a selected computer task, determine a selected
3 value for the objective criteria for the selected computer task, and select as the selected
4 program module one of the plurality of program modules which is matched with the
5 selected value of the objective criteria.

1 69. (New Claim) The apparatus of claim 65, wherein the evaluation module is
2 implemented in an agent manager.

1 70. (New Claim) The apparatus of claim 65, wherein the evaluation module is
2 implemented in the intelligent agent.

1 71. (New Claim) The apparatus of claim 65, wherein the intelligent agent
2 includes only the selected program module from the plurality of program modules, and
3 wherein the evaluation module is configured to construct the intelligent agent using the
4 selected program module.

1 72. (New Claim) The apparatus of claim 65, wherein the intelligent agent
2 includes each of the plurality of program modules, and wherein the evaluation module is
3 configured to execute only the selected program module to handle the computer task.

1 73. (New Claim) The apparatus of claim 65, wherein the plurality of program
2 modules are additive program modules, and wherein the evaluation module is configured
3 to select a subset of the plurality of program modules to handle the computer task.

1 74. (New Claim) The apparatus of claim 65, wherein the plurality of program
2 modules are alternative program modules, and wherein the evaluation module is
3 configured to select only one of the plurality of program modules to handle the computer
4 task.

1 75. (New Claim) The apparatus of claim 64, wherein the intelligent agent is
2 configured to conduct negotiations in an electronic commerce application, and wherein
3 the domain knowledge for each of the plurality of program modules is related to the
4 autonomy delegated thereto.

1 76. (New Claim) The apparatus of claim 75, wherein the plurality of program
2 modules includes a semi-autonomous program module, a fully-autonomous program
3 module, and a fully-dependent program module.

1 77. (New Claim) The apparatus of claim 75, wherein the objective criteria
2 includes a risk that a dispatched agent is subjected to in negotiations.

1 78. (New Claim) A method of handling a computer task on a remote computer
2 system using an intelligent agent, the method comprising the steps of:

3 (a) determining a risk for the remote computer system;
4 (b) based upon the risk for the remote computer system, selecting at least
5 one selected program module from a plurality of program modules having varied
6 degrees of domain knowledge, wherein the plurality of program modules are
7 configured to handle a common computer task in the remote computer system;
8 and

9 (c) configuring an intelligent agent to execute the at least one selected
10 program module to handle the computer task.